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ABSTRACT

These 12 profiles show the successes of workers with various handicaps who can serve as role models for people with disabilities and personalize knowledge for the non-disabled. Each profile begins with a brief remark by the individual on barriers and continues with his or her perspective on the work world and a discussion of his or her experiences and the set of barriers that needed to be broken. The individuals profiled are a dancer who is deaf, a counsellor at law with paraparisis, a printer with epilepsy, a student and office worker who has cerebral palsy, an auditor confined to a wheelchair with osteogenesis imperfecta, a boutique manager with epilepsy, a computer engineer who is blind, a social worker who is a paraplegic, a research neurochemist who is deaf, an actor/lecturer on crutches who was disabled by polio, a one-handed maintenance mechanic, and a teacher in a wheelchair. Both males and females are represented. A glossary of terms related to disabilities is appended. (YLB)

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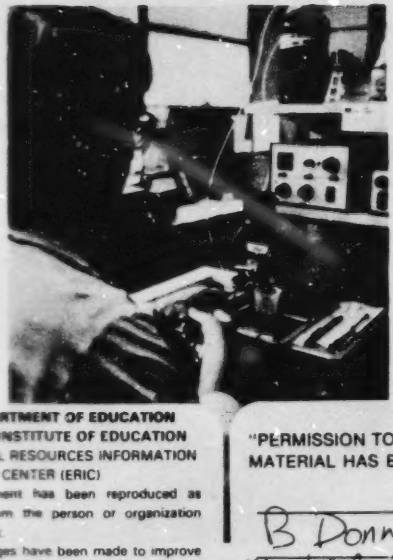
BREAKING THROUGH BARRIERS

Workers Who Are Disabled



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BREAKING THROUGH BARRIERS

Workers Who Are Disabled

by Mary Christian
photography by Jeff Fadellin

Brookdale Community College, Lincroft, New Jersey &
Division of Vocational Education, New Jersey Department of Education

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rita Corey, Dancer who is Deaf/Page 7

Rosalie B. Cooper, Esq., Counsellor at Law with Paraparisis/Page 11

Steven Piorkowski, Printer with Epilepsy/Page 15

Kathleen Pierson, Student and Office Worker who has Cerebral Palsy/Page 19

James D. Marzano, Jr., Auditor in a Wheelchair/Page 23

Camille Frasco, Boutique Manager with Epilepsy/Page 27

James Kutsch, Jr., Ph.D., Computer Engineer who is Blind/Page 31

Ruth Hughes, Social Worker who is Paraplegic/Page 35

Nansie Sharpless, Ph.D., Research Neurochemist who is Deaf/Page 39

Henry Holden, Actor/Lecturer on Crutches/Page 43

Peter Lucyk, One-handed Maintenance Mechanic/Page 47

Terri Seitz-Brown, Teacher in a Wheelchair/Page 51

Glossary/Page 55

INTRODUCTION

Where do people with disabilities find role models? How can the non-disabled learn about the skills and abilities of persons with handicaps? And what can be done by members of the handicapped population to overcome the obstacles imposed by society? "Breaking Through Barriers: Workers Who Are Disabled" addresses these questions.

Twelve profiles have been assembled to show the successes of workers with various handicaps, and to personalize knowledge for the non-disabled. All the participants wish to be recognized as people who work, rather than as disabled persons who happen to have jobs. Each has his or her perspective on the work world; each a set of barriers which needed to be broken. All were honest and open in sharing these, in hopes that their experiences may inspire others to seek their own means to their particular ends realistically, and with spirit.

RITA COREY

Dancer who is Deaf

Rita Corey on Barriers: ***I do notice one thing about this world. People don't know much about us. They have many ideas about "what is deaf" — that deaf people have big ears or no ears; they may never know that deaf people live next door. The handicap is invisible. I feel strongly that music is a good way to bring the hearing and the deaf together.***

Rita Corey has been in show business since she was 14 years old. Performing is in her blood; her father was a founding member of the National Theatre of the Deaf. This association gave her a unique advantage, but it is her drive and her talent which have determined her success.

Rita is the founder and artistic director of Musign Theatre Company, a troupe of four performers, all of whom are deaf. Their show combines music and dance with sign language, making the music's excitement accessible to audience members both hearing and deaf. Rita states, "Deaf people don't think they'll enjoy music. I try to prove them wrong by visualizing it. They realize it's fun to watch, fun to feel the vibrations coming through the floor." It should be pointed out that Rita and her colleagues have some hearing which can be heightened by hearing aids. Rita calls hers "my little friend" and uses it for rehearsing, performing and interacting with hearing persons. But legally all four are deaf and

they live in a silent world. The other members are Ed Chevy, Rita's brother; Bob Hiltermann, originally from Canada; and Lynn Mason, the wardrobe mistress who does two small performance segments and hopes to move into more roles. Scott Laird, a hearing person, travels with Musign as stage manager.

The troupe tours and every day is busy; performance days especially so. On a performance day the company arrives and unpacks sets, costumes and props. Scott gets busy setting the stage and the lights, a procedure which takes several hours. Lynn sets up the dressing rooms with costumes and makeup, and Rita, Ed and Bob begin warming up and rehearsing. All of this is done in silence; the performers work together in sign language. Rehearsal over, Rita and her colleagues have an early dinner and go back to the theatre to rest and get ready for the show. Energy levels are important, food serves as fuel and is selected as such; the actors can relax or fall asleep at short notice. Rita selects an out-of-the-way spot for a nap. The stagehands are very quiet, not wishing to disturb her by working noisily. Then they realize that to wake her, they would have to touch her. Noises do not bother the deaf.

About an hour before curtain time, the dressing room is full of silent activity. Makeup is applied, costumes are put on. In "the front of the house" the audience begins to enter. As they do so, they are given programs and balloons. "Balloons, when inflated and held," the program states, "act as vibration amplifiers." By holding the balloons, hearing persons can feel vibrations similar to those which music conveys to the deaf. The seats are a sea of brightly-colored balloons when the lights go down and the performance begins. It is magnetic. Rita, Ed and Bob have chosen varied pieces which cross over the past three decades of popular song. They dance, individually and together, and as they dance they sign and "lip sync" the lyrics. There is incredible synchronization; there is no indication that the performers are deaf. The backstage routine is frenzied with costume changes and makeup adjustments. They move through it calmly and, of course, silently, conserving energy for the time of return to the stage. Ed and Bob bring

their areas of expertise to performing, integrating their special skills in mime and signing into the show. Rita is clearly the leader, onstage and off. She is the center of many routines; her solo work is breathtakingly beautiful. The audience is spellbound and, at the finale, applaud and cheer loudly. The performers can *see* the response. The show over, the performers dress quickly. As they do, they pack the trunks and return the makeup to its cases. Scott "strikes the set" and begins to load the truck. Rita, Bob and Ed meet the public at a reception. Visibly tired, they all rise to the occasion. Many at the party are deaf children who are thrilled to meet the stars. Hearing persons cannot understand how such a quiet party can be such a rousing success.

Rita credits her training for her abilities. She, Bob and Ed all attended Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C., the only liberal arts college for the deaf. There Rita learned not only academic subjects, but also to perfect her voice. Her speech is totally understandable; her inflections are very similar to those of hearing persons. Her three years' association with National Theatre of the Deaf allowed her to hone her acting skills, and she went on from there to play the lead in a touring production of the award-winning play "Children of a Lesser God," a love story about a deaf woman and a hearing man. She continues lessons in dance and movement. But music is her love and passion and, after a year of organization and experimentation, she founded Musign. They have traveled throughout the United States and have even

performed in Japar. While all the members work on ideas, concepts and choreography, it is Rita who makes the decisions; it is Rita who decides which "rules to break" in incorporating "sign-mime" into the routines. She has won several Emmy awards for her work in television, has made commercials and public service spots, and has been featured on local and national talk shows. In the future, she hopes to add performers and expand the company to six. Development of a visual-mental code to allow the totally deaf to participate is vital — at this point the variety and intricacy of the songs do not allow for much participation by those with no hearing. She wants to do more international tours and media work and hopes to see deaf performers playing the deaf roles now given to hearing actors. She is realistic about this, saying, "My speech may not be adequate (for a particular part) but just *show* me. We can do it, and I must fight to prove it." One difficulty in achieving this aim, according to Rita, is that hearing persons unsuccessful in "regular" show business management try to take over the world of deaf performing. They have little understanding of the aims of deaf performers, and do not work to further these aims.

Asked if she makes a living, Rita answers quickly for herself and her Musign members, "We live on bread and butter. Water maybe. But it doesn't matter. This is our full-time job. It doesn't matter if we don't make much money." Her advice to those, hearing or deaf, about pursuing a career in the arts, or any career, is, "Whatever you enjoy, go for it." Rita Corey went for it, and is happy.

ROSALIE B. COOPER, ESQ.

Counsellor at Law with Paraparisis

Rosalie Cooper on Barriers: ***When we were in Russia it was a total disaster. They didn't help at all, couldn't care less. When the hotel personnel saw my motorized wheelchair, they refused to let me use the elevator — I finally just went through them. I got up to our room, but when we went to go out, they'd locked the elevator! My husband had to carry me down three flights of stairs.***

Rosalie Cooper goes ahead. This dynamic woman has always gone after what she wanted, before her partial paralysis and since. She comes from a family of lawyers, her father and brother are both attorneys. From her earliest days she knew law was her field, even though at the time few women pursued it. The only woman in her class, she experienced no discrimination from her professors and classmates, was an associate editor of the Law Review and graduated ranked first. She married Brian Halpern, M.D., three days after graduation. Retaining her maiden name for professional reasons, she clerked for a well-known law firm for a year. Upon passing the Bar examination she joined the firm as an associate.

Her career went on hold for several years when her children were born. They are now in their 20's and pursuing their own goals. Brian is a medical doctor, Nancy is a veterinarian and Lisa will be attending law school. When Nancy was a

toddler, Rosalie returned to work part-time in her township's Office of Land Acquisition. The area in which she lives has numerous small parcels of land which, in the 1920's, were sold at low cost through newspaper promotions. The lots are (and were) too small for building, but the people who purchased them were unaware of that. They bought to own land, possibly for retirement or investment. The township is in the process of attempting to get the land back and rezone it into usable, taxable property. On the office wall is a map which indicates progress, lot by small lot. Rosalie is in charge of determining the most appropriate means for acquiring each lot, setting the process in motion, and "bringing the land back." She also developed a small private practice and several years later took yet another part-time job, becoming the first woman prosecutor in her county's 135-year history.

Her condition, partial paralysis of the legs, came about as the result of surgery for removal of a benign tumor which had encroached on, and into, her spinal cord. The microsurgery was extremely intricate; apparently a blood vessel to a nerve was severed in the process. After a month of recuperation, it became evident that use of her legs would be limited. She was "pulling herself around on walkers and canes." Because the mobility of her torso and arms is unimpaired, the doctors suggested she try a new scooter-type wheelchair, which Rosalie initially resisted, fearing she would become "too dependent" on it. But the mobility of the device won out. Rosalie has the latest model, which runs on electrically-charged batteries, has a seat which can be raised and lowered to meet the levels of various desks, tables and counters, and which scoots along at quite a clip. One of the things she appreciates the most about it is that "When you ride one of these things, nobody feels sorry for you. People say, 'Give me a ride' or, 'Boy, I wish I had one of those!' There are probably a lot of people who could use these that don't. I recommend it. It makes a lot of difference in your attitude and people's attitudes toward you." Rosalie stresses that rehabilitation funds may be available for purchasing the scooter-chair. Her mobility is great, her van has hand controls and a lift for the scooter.

Rosalie returned to her jobs. Asked what the effect of her paraparsis on her professional life was, she answers, "nothing." She feels that, without her

saying anything, her condition brought her employers' attentions to the needs of the handicapped. Ramps, elevators and adapted restrooms were installed, which helps not only her but also handicapped persons and senior citizens who have business in the buildings. Her colleagues (and even total strangers) have been tremendously helpful and supportive. "I remember once, after a snowstorm, having an indoor-outdoor conference with a judge. Because his entrance wasn't cleared, he sat at an open window, and I sat in the yard. Nothing confidential," she laughs, then gets serious, "I am in a profession which requires

a mouth and a brain, neither of which are affected by my condition." She still works in the Land Acquisition Office but has left her prosecutor's position. Her private practice consumes more and more of her time.

Rosalie experiences some frustration with her condition, when she can't get to, or into, a place she wants to go. She collects hand-made working duck and wildfowl decoys, a hobby unusual for a non-hunter. She has more than eighty, and continually searches "for better ducks." To attend a recent sales exhibition, she had to inquire how strong her husband felt; the show was being held on a non-accessible floor. "Even one step is a mountain. I don't like to be carried." she says. If it's *neccesary*, I don't hesitate to ask. But if it's just for fun for me I feel differently."

Rosalie feels that being disabled has made her more compassionate and more patient. She has an increased awareness of the problems of others and is much more attuned to architectural barriers — insights which, without her disability, she might not have gained. She even feels that her wheelchair can give her an advantage. She is often brought to the head of the line in restaurants. On a trip to London, she was admitted to the Houses of Parliament

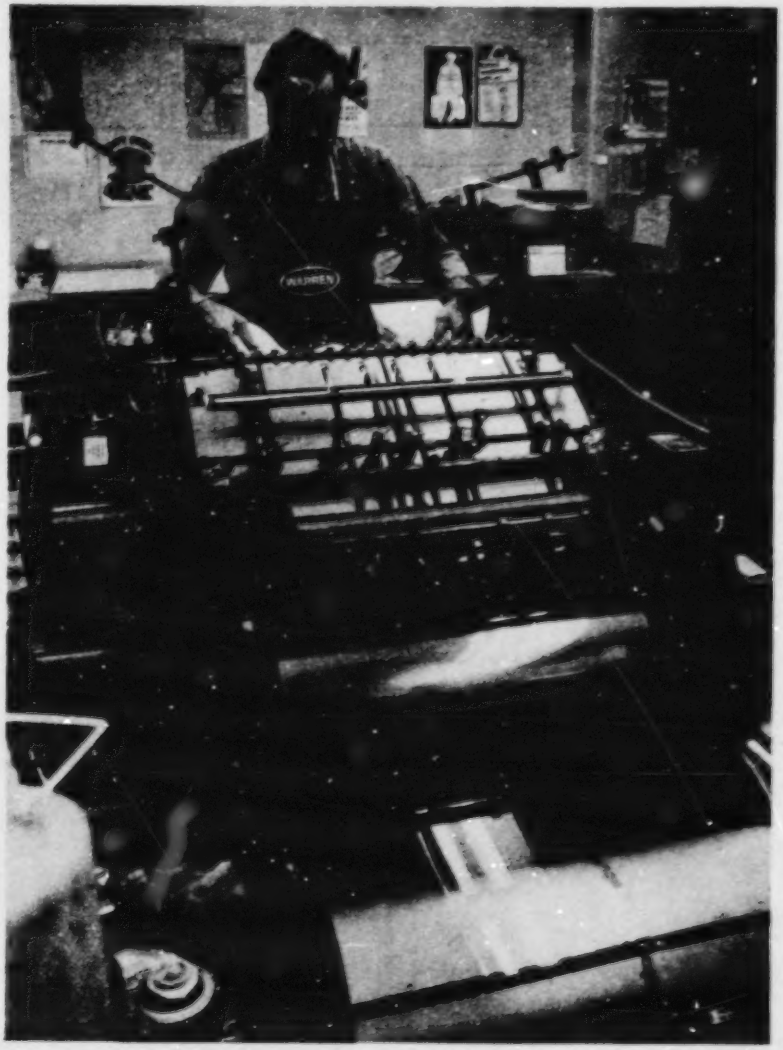
through the Prime Minister's Gate and the Queen's elevator and guided into the VIP section. The other members of her party were "way the heck up in the balcony. As we left through the Queen's Exit, all the Bobbies tipped their hats. Our guide said he'd never known such a thing to happen, and it never would have if I wasn't disabled."

Law, she feels, is a dynamic field. Every day it changes, every day it grows. To persons with various physical disabilities she recommends paralegal work and/or becoming a lawyer because the field is so changeable, has so many specialities and need not call for much physical action. "You need to be able to do a lot of reading, be able to write well. You must have the ability to see an issue from every side, because you need to be able to prosecute or defend. You might even be called upon to judge." Rosalie is awaiting word; she has been recommended for a Superior Court judgeship and very much hopes to be appointed to the bench. In the meantime, she keeps moving ahead and nothing stands in her way.

STEVEN PIORKOWSKI

Printer with Epilepsy

Steve Piorkowski on Barriers: ***Being fired from jobs or not being hired; not being allowed to participate in certain things, people actually breaking off relationships because they really didn't want to understand. They had something in their heads that was put there many, many years ago. It's called myth, ignorance.***



Steven Piorkowski is a big man. At 6'7" he towers over the equipment in the print shop where he works. Steve has the look of an athlete and as he moves around the shop, from Heidelberg press to camera, from binding a job to mixing inks, his movements are disciplined, expert and economical. He seems to allow exactly the right amount of energy for each task and to get each done correctly and professionally.

Steve has grand mal epilepsy, "tonic clonic" he explains, "they call it now." At the age of three, a severe case of measles resulted in a high fever and subsequent scarring of the temporal lobe of the brain. His condition was not formally diagnosed until he was 18. In a way, the diagnosis came as a relief. Too many things had been misinterpreted; too many people had turned away from him. Since the diagnosis Steve has learned much about his condition and therefore much about himself. His medication is an integral part of every day; since his seizures tend to occur in the morning, he must

take his Dylantin faithfully "every morning, every night." In most instances Steve has a warning, an "aura" involving perhaps a smell of burning when there is no fire in the area. This is to him a definite indication that a seizure is about to begin and he takes the precaution of moving breakables and dropping to the floor to guard against injury. If the aura does not warn him, he "comes to" disoriented, but with the realization that he has had a seizure.

One of the things Steve has learned is to deal with this continual uncertainty. He does not sit around waiting for seizures to happen, in continual fear that one might occur. Still, the fear is there. Steve deals with it through physical activity. After his diagnosis, he went through a period of inertia,

then realized he missed sports and returned to playing basketball, a sport in which, with his height, he had excelled. He also joined a fitness program, one component of which was running. He began with about five miles a week, and quickly found that he was gaining in strength and occupying his mind. He increased his mileage, progressed, and realized that running was the sport for him. The activity adds to his endurance and seems to cut down the number of seizures. Steve no longer sees himself as an epileptic who runs. He typifies himself as "a runner who has epilepsy. Every so often," he says, "I experience the fear of seizures, and when I do, I just push myself a little bit more. It (the exertion) takes away some of the stress and relieving stress is a great part of helping yourself with anything."

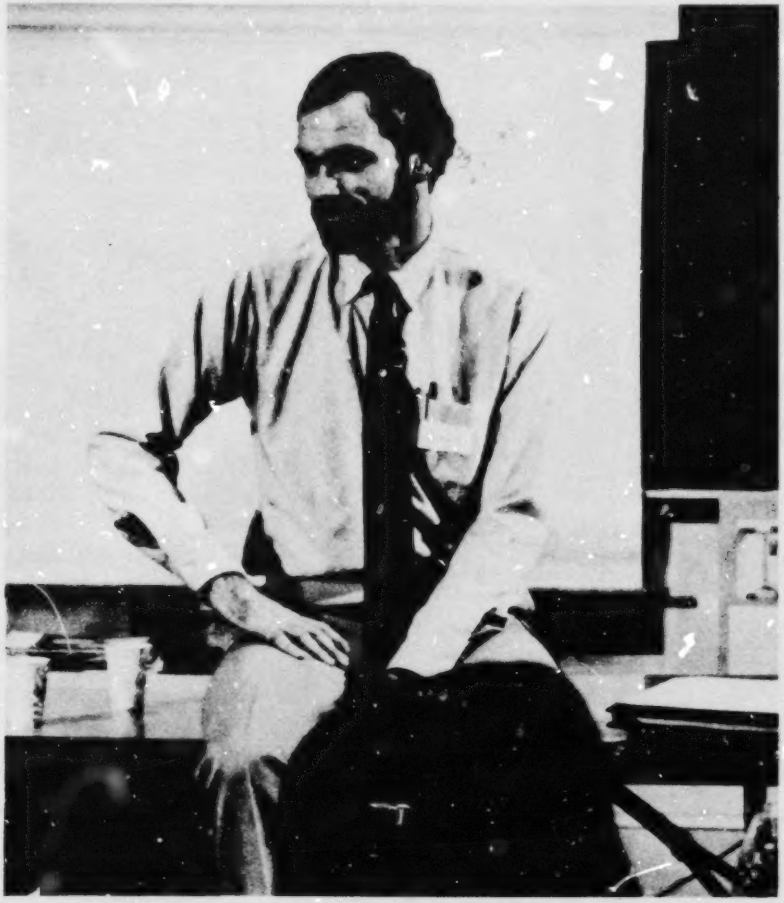
His training has paid off. Steve is now a marathonner. He runs to better his time and to meet the challenge of finishing the race. The New York Marathon was a peak experience for him; he and his friend Michael ran the race together, pacing each other, hoping to reach the halfway point at 12:30. At 12:30, on the Queensborough Bridge, 13 miles into the 26-mile race, Steve's wrist alarm went off. During the final two

miles Steve got severe leg cramps, but kept going. "I knew that I had to just go for that finish line, keep my concentration. At the end I was actually sprinting in with my friend, and we held hands to finish because we had run the race together."

Steve brings this same determination to his profession. Printing is exacting work and every aspect must be done carefully. He has had some formal training, especially on the Heidelberg, but stresses that, in his opinion, the best way to learn is by working in a print shop. Training is important, "experiencing the knowledge" is vital. "Try," he says, "to start from the bottom and work up," learning all the jobs that go into producing good printing and good products. These include photography, enlarging, setting type, offset, mixing inks for color, inking the press, keeping ink and water balanced, cutting paper, folding, and many more.

As for his disability, Steve finds that openness about it leads to lessening of the myths. His boss, Mr. Frederick Hallowell, says of his employee, "I learned about Steve's condition shortly after he was hired and was surprised. There had been nothing to indicate that he had a problem. Steve and I sat down and talked it over and we agreed that together we were going to deal with it. Steve has been an inspiration. I won't say it was easy on either of us, but there was never a time when I felt that Steve was using his problem as a crutch. I haven't allowed and Steve hasn't tried to use it as a means to get special treatment or to justify the problem. You don't justify a problem — you learn to live with it. If you are square with your employer and he is square with you, there is no limit and you can achieve anything you strive for."

In his commitment to informing people about epilepsy, Steve is the president of his county's Epilepsy Foundation. In this capacity, he conducts workshops for persons with epilepsy, and also runs awareness sessions for persons wishing to know more about it. He visits grammar school classes, presenting a film strip about his condition and talking



with the children. Steve knows that dispelling children's fears about grand mal in the young will have a great effect on how the condition is viewed in the future. The children are amazingly receptive, reacting to Steve as they would to a friend. The "thank you" notes he receives from them prove that he has achieved the desired effect; that ignorance has been lessened, at least for that group and the lives touched by theirs. Asked about his motivations, Steve states, "I don't want to sound goody-goody, but I'm just doing what I have to do. I should say I don't *have* to do it. Nobody *has* to do anything. I don't *need* running; I don't need my medication. I *want* them in my life." Steven Piorkowski is a big man.

KATHLEEN PIERSON

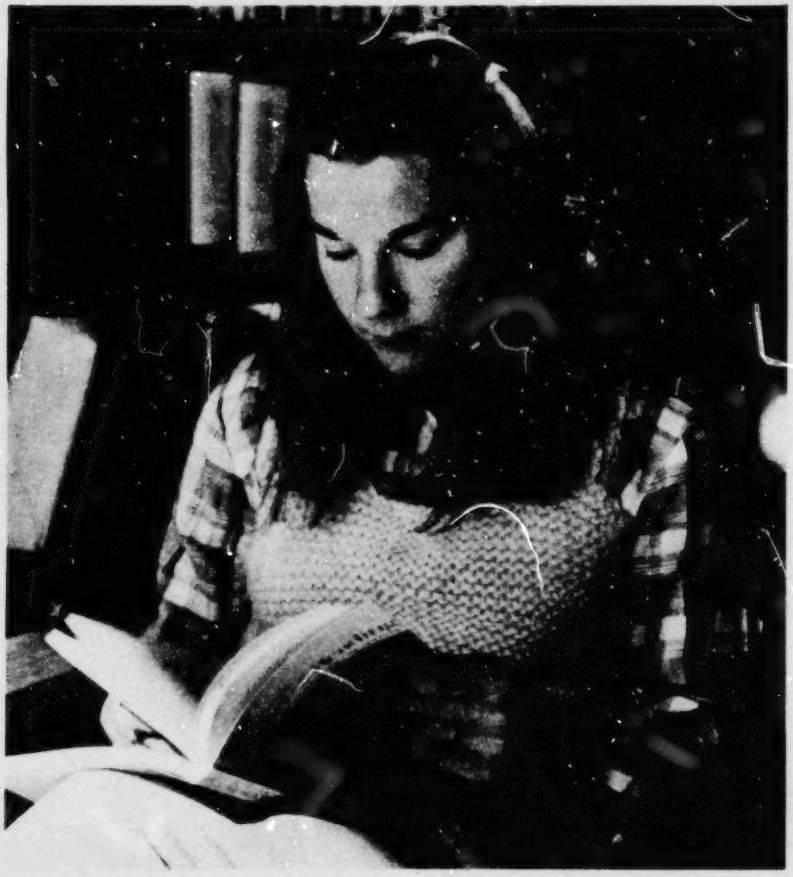
Student and Office Worker who has Cerebral Palsy

Kathy Pierson on Barriers: ***People's ideas of how far I can go, in school or on a job, are sometimes different from mine. When I say I want to do something I haven't done before, they tell me to think it over, as if they feel I probably won't be able to do it.***

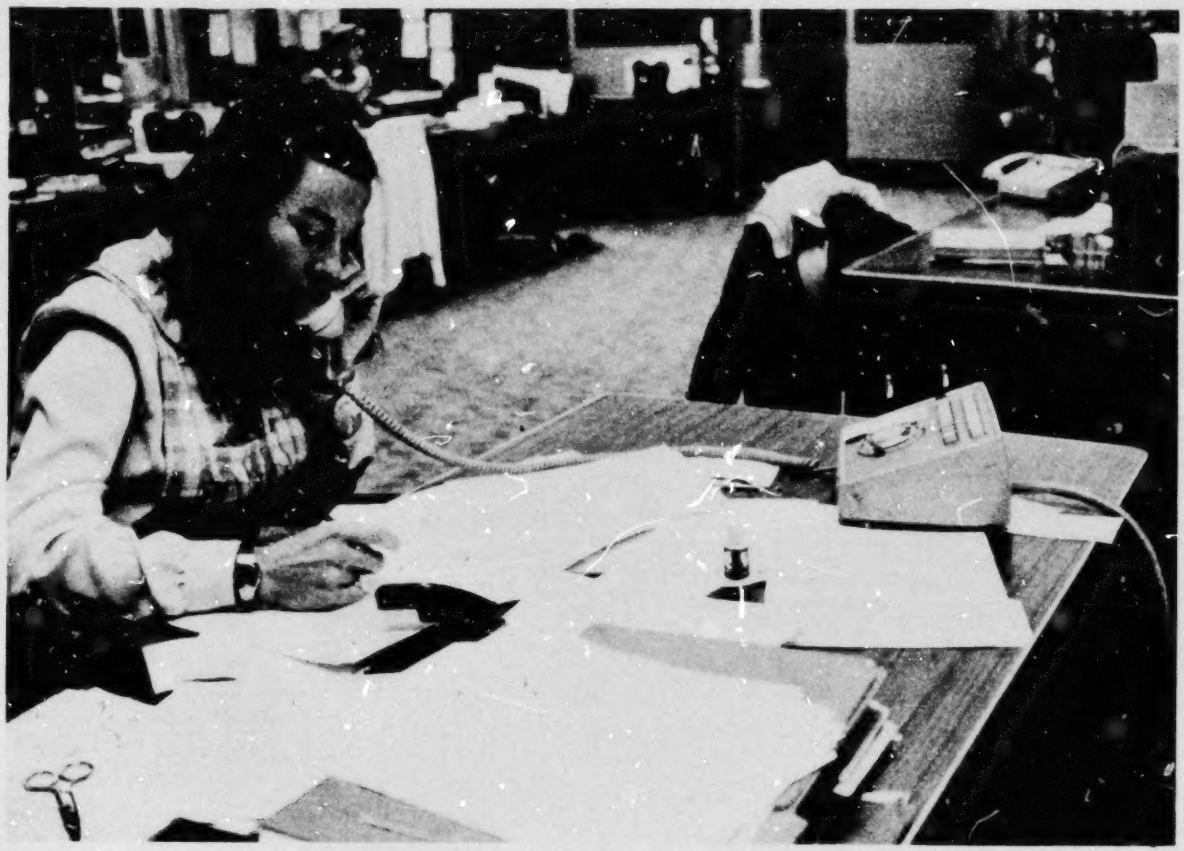
Kathy Pierson is open to possibilities: her days are full of things she needs and wants to do. Kathy is in the process of choosing a career, and is choosing carefully so her abilities and talents will be used to the fullest. To do this, she has to learn, about herself and her possible place in the working world. She is using her college years not only to study, but also to gain self-knowledge. Kathy is very busy.

Her cerebral palsy was diagnosed when she was three. She was, she says, "born worse" than she is now. Physical therapy was started immediately, but even so, Kathy's legs became more and more immobile. She needed a complex operation which involved rearrangement of knee bones and muscles. This was done during her second grade year, or rather, during what should have been her second grade year. She spent that time in a cast, then in therapy learning to walk again. "I avoided the wheelchair completely; wore braces less and less, then only at night. And finally I got out of them completely." But Kathy had

lost a year of school, and had some difficulty in her third grade class. "I feel that what you miss in an early grade may continue to be missed through the rest of school," she says. Kathy and her teachers set about rectifying the situation and her grades went up. She graduated from eighth grade and went on to high school, choosing a business program because, "I didn't want to go to college. I wanted to get a good job." Kathy had two more operations during high school which loosened the tendons in her legs so she could place her feet correctly when walking. Advances in cast-making allowed her much mobility during her recuperations. "The fiberglass casts were great. I could swim, bathe, do just about anything." Throughout high school teachers were considerate; Kathy had her own elevator key and, if she needed it, was given extra time to change classes.

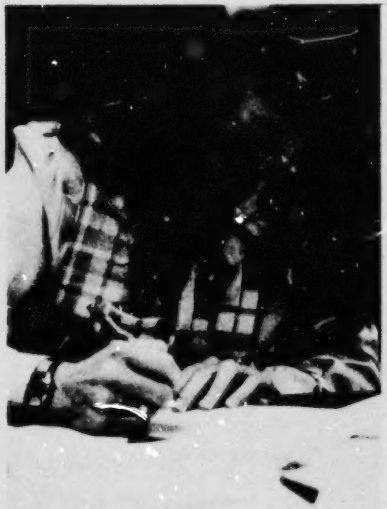


As a senior business student, Kathy was eligible for the cooperative education program, a system by which students attend school in the morning and work in the afternoon. Her job was in the career guidance office working for the counselors. It was a meaningful association; Kathy not only gained work experience, but also opened her eyes to other career options. Although she was still mainly interested in business, she took a summer job after graduation working at a beach club as a counselor for pre-school girls, supervising beach and pool games and chaperoning dances and social events. In the fall, she entered a program through which she received on-the-job training to expand her business skills. Her assignment was to an agency called "HELPS" — Help Educate Little People who are Special. Her business skills were needed, but more and more Kathy found that she worked well with the children. For the first time in her life, Kathy had to consider going to college. If she wanted to teach, she had to go back to school.



"People questioned my ability to do college work, and I was nervous. But I had to do it," and college life is perfect for her. She is studying to be a teacher's aide, and she serves on the student government and the student service board. She is dedicated to the school's handicapped students, and serves on a special task force which identifies and solves problems faced by disabled students. "I notice things more now. My classes have taught me about people, my disabled friends have made me aware of other people's problems. I don't need any special adaptations or help, but they do." As she studies, Kathy grows in confidence about working with children; it "makes me feel good, and actually, the kids see things so differently that they teach me!" She is, however, still drawn to the business world, and feels her career "could go either way."

She has two goals, and this dual involvement recently led her to reduce her course load to part-time, and take a part-time job with Job Service, New Jersey's non-profit employment and placement agency. Her duties are mainly clerical, filling out forms, filing, making up folders for appli-



cants, typing, answering phones. But a program for unemployed youth is under way, and Kathy hopes that as it expands she may have the opportunity to do some interviewing.

Kathy's walk is a bit awkward; her doctors tell her that her "hips are too tight to allow for free leg motion." They are talking about another operation which has a 50-50 chance of success, and a long and arduous recuperation and rehabilitation period. Kathy is waiting for better odds, feeling that the medical field advances so quickly that her chances will get better as time goes on. "Besides," she says, "I'm too busy right now. My walking gets me where I want to go." Transportation is a problem; Kathy has her license to drive a hand-controlled car, but hasn't the funds to buy one. Her "special friend," a fellow student, takes her where she needs to go, or she relies on family or public transportaton.

Through her busy days, Kathy keeps her options open. "I never say never. Coming to college after saying 'never' all my life taught me that." As to her ultimate career choice, she has a "wait and see" attitude, knowing she has or is gaining the skills to do well in the world of work. "It could be teaching, it could be personnel work. It will depend on what comes along. I'll take the job that's best for me." Her advice is "Never quit. Be open to things, and try. Decide for yourself what you can and can't do. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't. Listen to the people who tell you that you can! And," she adds, "get busy!"

JAMES D. MARZANO, JR.

Auditor in a Wheelchair

Jim Marzano on Barriers: ***I feel my life was sort of determined for me, that others decided what I should do. Knowing what I know now, I might do things differently.***

The room in which Jim Marzano works is anything but quiet. There are two rows of five desks each; phones ring continually and typewriters rattle. In the midst of all this activity Jim manages to maintain an air of silence and concentration around his work area. He performs his detail-oriented duties with quiet professionalism, as if he were the only one in the room.

Jim was born with osteogenesis imperfecta, a condition commonly referred to as "brittle bones." The bones do not have enough calcium, they become malformed and unable to support weight or stress. Jim spent the first nine years of his life in a hospital "for crippled children" as doctors tried various diets, treatments and operations. There were calcium injections and months spent in traction with his legs suspended from bars over the bed. Since even regular movement could cause a bone to break, the doctors said that Jim must rest continually. Treatment proved ineffective. Jim was sent home. Even though he has spent so much time in the hospital, Jim feels his family treated him as "just another kid" as far as discipline and expectations were concerned. He and his brother (his baby sister was quite another thing) shared equally and were so treated. So he didn't feel too different and was reasonably outgoing.

At the age of about 12, he says, he "began feeling some energy, and was not content to stay inside." His family lived in a second-floor walk-up apartment. During the summer his father, before going to work, would carry Jim and his wheelchair downstairs and outside. He would remain outside all

day, until his father returned. Gradually, he began to explore. His arms are strong; he could wheel himself around the neighborhood, learning to play ball at a local playground (and breaking a hand in the process). With his progressively-greater activity, Jim noticed that his body was gaining in strength; that the time-span between bone breaks was becoming longer. He now feels strongly that programmed, appropriate exercise may be better than bed rest for those with his condition, and that his pre-teen surge of energy did him great good, physically and mentally.

His schooling was irregular, classes in the hospital and, after his release, tutoring at home. The first time he entered a classroom he was a high school freshman. It was a difficult transition; Jim admits he had never been so challenged. He failed a few subjects before getting into the swing. But he loved meeting new people and adjusted to the demands. His godmother was a bookkeeper, and urged Jim to take bookkeeping courses. She was a great influence on him. Together they sold greeting cards to friends and neighbors; she put all the profits into a bank account for Jim. This fund allowed Jim to buy his first adapted car.

After he graduated, Jim spent a year "back in the neighborhood" while the rehabilitation bureau sought appropriate training for him. He was, he says, "hanging around," but now realizes this year was one of the most valuable in his life. He learned to drive a hand-controlled car and to play pool rather well. He regularly visited the local auto repair shop. Little by little, he learned the tools, and the ins-and-outs of car engines. He developed an interest in mechanics which is with him to this day, and gained skills which allow him to do minor repairs on his own car. The "hanging around" was really a series of social and skill-oriented experiences. It was determined that Jim was good with numbers and he was enrolled in a private business school. Upon graduation, he took a job with a state agency, making a lateral move a few years later to the taxation division of the treasury department, where he works today. In the more than 20 years since his professional move, Jim's job has expanded and his duties have grown. He began with bookkeeping, then "unofficially" moved into junior accounting, enhancing his knowledge of the field by working in it. To attain a formal position as an auditor, college accounting credits and a state test were required. Jim entered college to get these credits, took the examination and was promoted into an auditor's slot. He became involved in "assessments," corporate tax returns for

compliance with state tax law, and determining if the companies have filed correctly and paid their required taxes. His knowledge of the law is great; his accounting skills are excellent. He is checking the work of other professionals and must be accurate and thorough. He uses a computer terminal and an extensive microfilm record bank to "check back" into the companies' files. In making his determinations, he must be thoroughly up-to-date in the frequent changes in the law. Since determinations are communicated by letter, Jim stresses clear, concise, correct business writing and the ability to recognize spelling and grammar errors as imperative in his job. And since consultation with colleagues is a daily occurrence, he feels that he must have good oral skills as well. The "pool of quiet" around his desk results from a highly-developed ability to concentrate, although Jim admits that on rare occasions, when a case is particularly complex, he may move into one of the conference rooms. He enjoys his co-workers, and respects them. "We may fight," he says, "but it quickly blows over." And personally he is very pleased that his bone breaks have become fewer and fewer; the most recent was over

three years ago. He credits this to his increased strength and is working with a dance teacher to develop exercise classes for people with various disabilities.

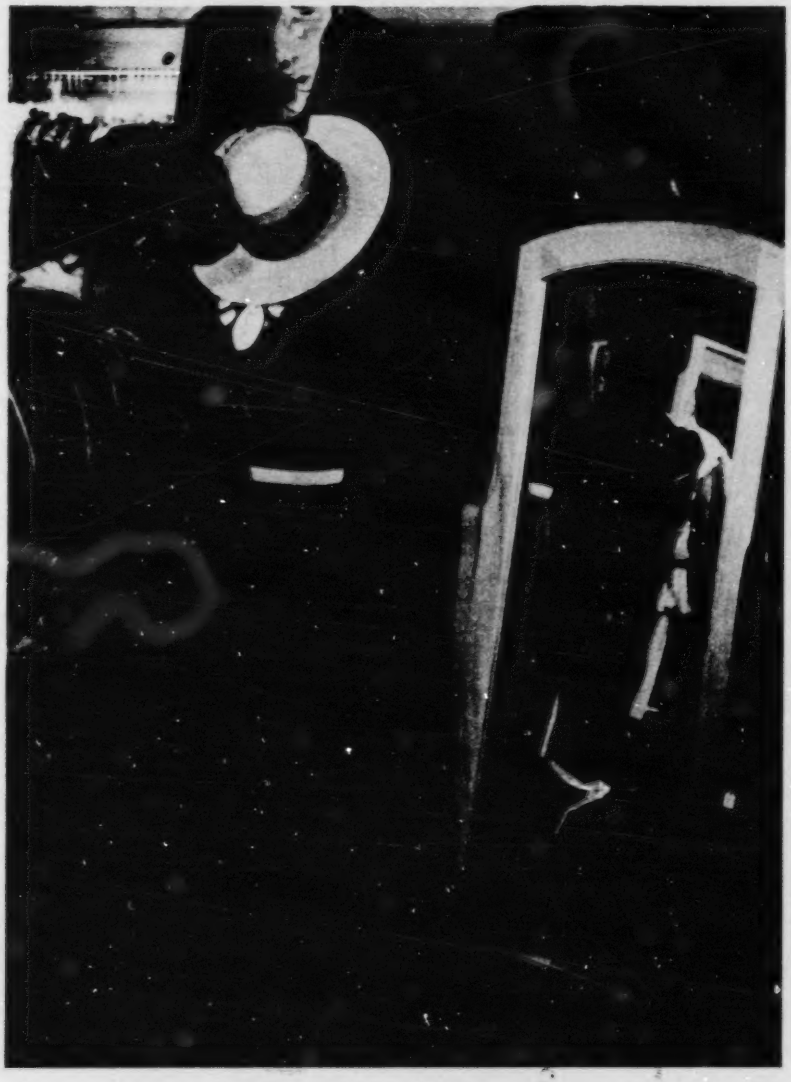
His life has other numbers. Jim has two grown daughters, Lory Ann and Tina Jean. Lory Ann and her husband recently presented Jim with number one grandchild, a boy. "I don't feel older," says Jim, "just prouder." He retains great interest in mechanical things. Amateur radio is one hobby. He recently bought a home computer and enrolled in a college computer course to learn to use it to its fullest. Electronics fascinates him; had the field been available when he was starting out, he feels he might have found his niche there. He is already planning for his retirement; perhaps he will use his knowledge to open a small business, preparing tax forms. He's looking forward to having time to do some woodworking, and to expanding his involvement in organizations dedicated to the handicapped. Jim's current interest area is elimination of structural barriers, and raising awareness of architects, builders and owners. He works closely with his home town's building inspector to monitor new buildings for parking spaces, ramps, elevators and restroom facilities. He looks over older structures and suggests cost-effective modifications. His knowledge of law has expanded from the narrower world of taxes into the wide realm of the rights of the disabled.

Jim urges people with disabilities to learn these rights, to take full advantage of what federal and state agencies can do for them. Interests should be expressed, so that a career choice reflects personal preferences as well as abilities. And the disabled should know that their disabilities need not bar them from life, with all its joys and sorrows. Asked why he has been so successful in his career, Jim replies quietly and with a smile, "Why not?"

CAMILLE FRASCO

Boutique Manager with Epilepsy

Camille Frasco on Barriers: ***There are so many misunderstandings about epilepsy. People automatically assume because you have this disability you are mentally incapable; all of a sudden every other disability falls into yours . . .***



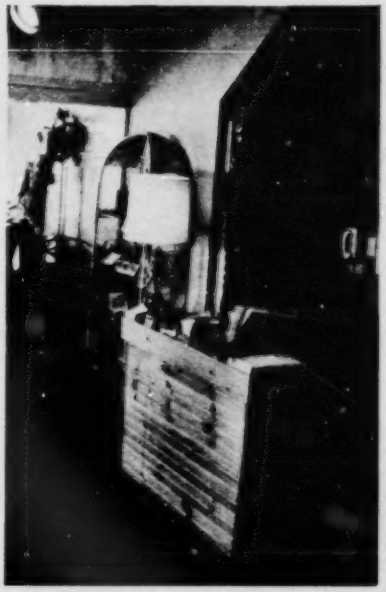
"Another Angle" is a boutique which combines high-fashion ladies' wear with a small selection of fine glass and china. The atmosphere is comfortable, the tone is fashionably elegant. Customers are treated casually but courteously. Those who come in regularly are addressed by name. Camille sets the tone of the establishment, treating her clients as she would like to be treated, helping those who seek assistance, allowing browsers to wander at will. She is always available to help or to answer questions.

A relative newcomer to the world of fashion, Camille's previous work experience was in education. In deciding to make a career change, Camille encountered some lucky breaks. A relative had an open store space available; a friend had fashion experience waiting to be put to use. Camille joined forces with Gina Grasso. Gina's knowledge of marketing and fashion trends, combined with Camille's highly sensitized interpersonal skills gained through classroom and individual situations, led to the design, staffing and opening of

"Another Angle."

As in any new venture, growth is slow, but "Another Angle" is building a clientele. Gina states that dealing with the public is the number one priority, closely followed by knowledge of merchandise and ability to communicate that knowledge. Day by day, Camille adapts her communication skills to varying one-to-one situations, and studies the merchandise, learning about fabrics, textures, colors. She does ordering, accounting, trouble-shooting — all the things that go into the running of a small business. Recently, Gina and Camille were asked to stage their first fashion show. They took up the challenge, displaying not only their merchandise, but also themselves. In reality, they were as much in the public eye as their models. If they weren't professional and correct, the impact of fashions they were showing would be lessened. Camille and Gina put together a theme of "Celebration," selected professional and amateur models and attire for them, held rehearsals, took reservations in the store, wrote the commentary, assisted in the dressing room, and bit nails from the back of the house. The show was a rousing success; professionalism and good will added to "Another Angle's" client base.

Seen in her professional surroundings, Camille has "style and energy," a phrase used in the fashion show to describe one of the outfits. She moves around the store slowly and calmly. Those watching her would not guess that she moves the way she does because of a disability, but rather would think her motions appropriate to the tone of the store.



Camille was born with a mild case of cerebral palsy which affects her eye-hand coordination and distance perceptions. She is not allowed to drive a car, is especially careful crossing streets, and must ration her movements so she will not misjudge and knock over merchandise. This

she does with grace. She also has grand mal epilepsy which she does not view as a handicap. Indeed, she seems more inconvenienced by her inability to drive. She lives close to the store, and depends on public transportation and friends for visiting and for professional trips.

Dylantin, a medication which helps to control epileptic seizures, is part of her daily life. Her condition is well-controlled, but the medication is not a cure. No matter how long she has been seizure-free, Camille knows that a seizure can occur. She has physical indications when one is about to happen — usually a tingling sensation beginning in the hand and moving up the arm. Should this feeling persist, Camille lowers the lights which affect her eyes, moves breakables and drops to the floor to avoid possible injury from falling. When the seizure has run its course, she is weak and must have time to come around slowly, allowing for possible disorientation.

With co-workers and friends, Camille is open about her condition. She feels it is only fair to let them know she has epilepsy, and only practical to inform them what they can and should do to assist her, should a seizure occur. Giving this information to those with whom she spends much time alleviates panic, and allows the people to be effective, rather than responding to emotion or to old wives' tales. She finds response to her openness is positive, but continues to be amazed about the general lack of knowledge about epilepsy and continues to explain to persons who are puzzled, feeling that such explanation helps her, and increases public awareness about the condition. She meets the issue head-on, knowing that her condition is part of her and that people unwilling to deal with it are unable to deal with her as a person. And she does not want

sympathy, any more than she would want it for wearing eyeglasses.

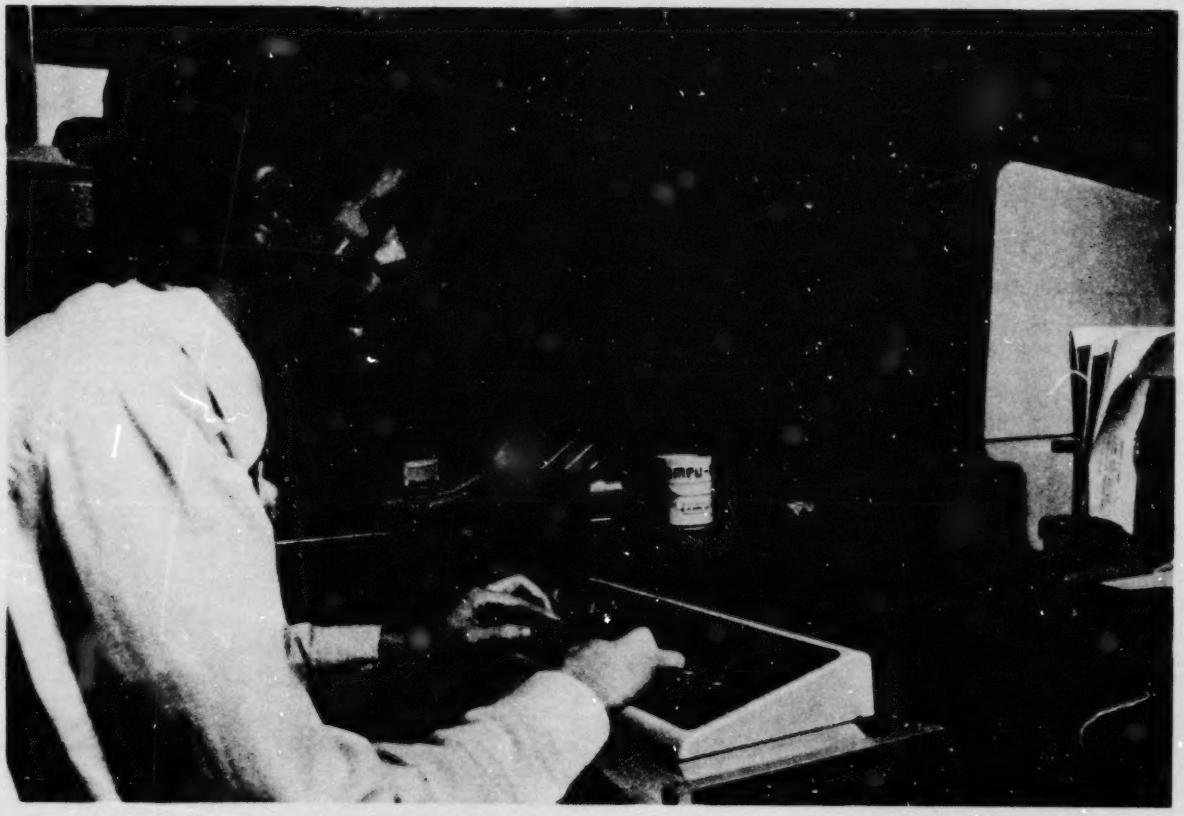
When faced with the idea of a seizure's occurring at "Another Angle" — an event which has so far not transpired, Camille states that she would move into the stock room and lie down on the floor. If the stock room was occupied, she would simply have to move into the center of one of the store's rooms. If Gina was there, Camille would count on her assistance; if not, she would simply do what must be done, informing any customers who happened to be present of her condition if time allowed.

Camille feels she is strong in the ability to learn and the willingness to accept changes. These have served her well in making her career transition and in dealing with her disability. As she learns more about the business, her confidence grows. As she informs more people about her condition, she gains more knowledge about herself and makes more friends. She loves the store and her life style and hopes, "first to have another Angle, or a second Another Angle; a third, fourth or fifth Another Angle. We'll be somewhere," she asserts, "you'll know us."

JAMES KUTSCH, JR., Ph.D.

Computer Engineer who is Blind

Jim Kutsch on Barriers: ***When I began college, schools in general were not as sensitized as they are today. My second day on campus, somebody from the chemistry department said, "A blind person can't take chemistry." I did not have an opportunity to present my case and I wasn't really prepared to fight with the university.***



As Jim Kutsch talks about his life and his career it is evident that, by fighting if necessary, he will set his own goals and find the means to reach them. Blinded by a chemical accident at age 16 (he also lost half of his right hand), Jim returned to high school for his final year without any special training in coping with blindness, and, with the help of friends and volunteer readers, completed his studies. By the time he arrived at college he had been trained to read Braille and use a cane. By the end of his freshman year, he had acquired a seeing-eye dog. He found himself interested in the experimental aspects of psychology and enrolled in a few computer courses to learn to assemble data. He quickly

became fascinated with computer concepts and possibilities, and upon graduation was accepted into a masters program in computer science. He was soon "driving the technicians crazy" by modifying the existing machines so he could "read the computer's output." His first venture used a Morse code concept. Jim, familiar with Morse through his ham radio hobby, used the sounds made by the computer's printer to formulate audible Morse equivalents. Then he began a system by which the printer could be modified (with a piece of elastic and two paper clips!) to produce Braille dots which could be read with the fingers.

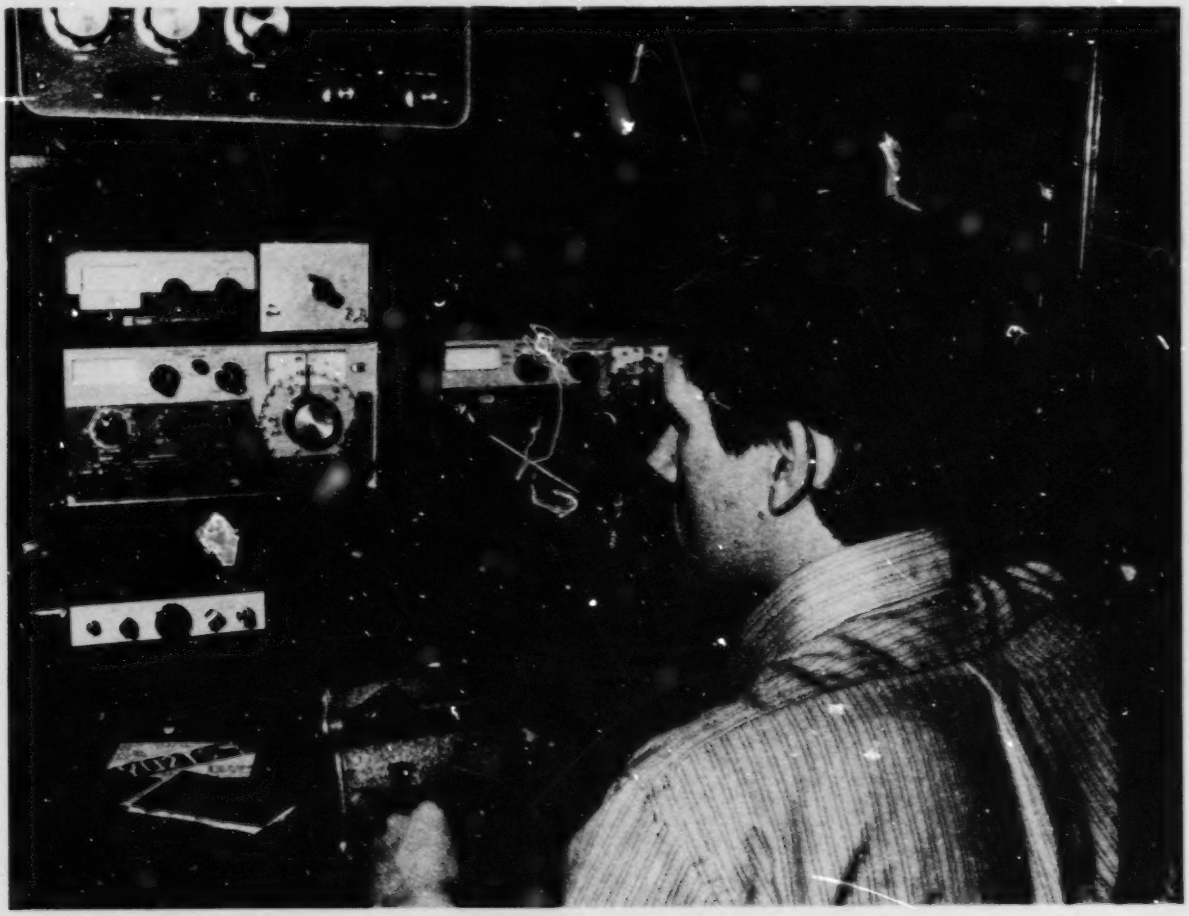
Jim completed his masters degree and became an instuctor of computer science. Spurred by his colleagues, he then entered a doctoral program, choosing development of a prototype computer terminal which could "speak" as the topic for his thesis. This he accomplished, publishing his dissertation, but not patenting his concept, which was quickly picked up by companies interested in marketing the terminals. On completion of his doctorate, Jim returned to teaching and also served two terms as a national lecturer for the Association for Computing Machinery. This professional

organization identifies and selects 30 to 40 outstanding computer scientists each year and sends them around the country to bring others in the field up-to-date on advances in specialized computer areas. Jim traveled nationwide, and shared his expertise in synthetic speech applications and the talking computer terminal.

Realizing that he wished to continue in computer systems development, Jim made the jump from teaching to private industry, and is now a member of the technical staff of American Telephone and Telegraph's Information Systems Laboratories. He and his dog Sadie go to and from work in a carpool with other Lab employees. They move into and through the massive complex with complete assurance. Sadie is a worker; an "added intelligence" which can make determinations and decisions. The company also views Sadie as a professional; her name is under Jim's on the office door.

Translating the duties and challenges of computer engineering into terms understandable to a non-computer person isn't easy, but Jim stresses that he tries to speak about computers and his work in plain English. He manages projects, and has designed and modified "hardware" — the computer machinery. At present he is more concerned with "software" — the programs which, on their own or linked with other programs into complex

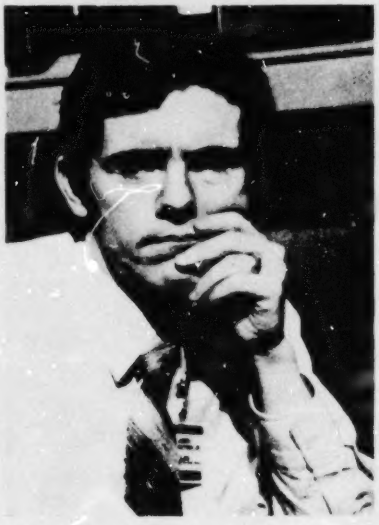
systems, tell the machinery what to do and how to do it. A system may involve programs developed by 30 people or more; Jim is responsible for linking them together logically, for checking duplication of effort, for rectifying errors and for implementing modifications suggested after the system is in use. For success in the field, Jim stresses the need for inquisitiveness, logical thinking and interest in an attention to detail. In his position, he also needs good communication skills, oral and written, for interacting with other professionals and for explaining concepts and modifications. His office is equipped with Jim's latest talking terminal and with a Braille-writer on which Jim can draft memos and make notes for himself. At meetings, he carries a small cassette recorder which has an amplified microphone. He can record the proceedings and "make notes" by whispering at a level so low that the meeting remains undisturbed. Last year, Jim was honored with a Distinguished Technical Staff award. He was given a plaque and a letter of commendation,



both are on his office wall. The plaque and letter in Braille translation were presented to him as well. They are on his bookshelf in an attractive case, and he shows it with pride. The professional gratification is great; Jim is happy in his job and, he says, "here for the duration." Eventually he hopes to move into management, but meanwhile the opportunities for growth and discovery present constant challenges.

At home, Jim relaxes completely. He retains his interest in ham radio, and has recently taken up woodworking, concentrating mostly on the fashioning of clock cases. He's been sailing, and hopes to increase his participation in this sport as time permits. His family is of paramount importance. Jim has known his wife Kimberly since high school; they married while he was in graduate school. They have three children, Jason, Jessica and Joan, in whom Jim delights and with whom he enjoys all aspects of family life.

Jim feels fortunate to be in the scientific community. "Scientists don't say, 'You can't'; they address the technological problem of 'how can you?' Scientific people," he continues, "scratch their heads and start thinking." He urges disabled people to identify their interests and to select schools, not because of good services for the handicapped, but because of program excellence in the subject they want to pursue. "You want the best training, not the best services. In the working world, you will have to deal with things as they are, not necessarily as they should be. What better place to learn to deal realistically than in school, while getting the best of training." He goes on, "The disabled should not be influenced in career choice by their disabilities. The choices must be based on abilities, and then the sky's the limit."



RUTH HUGHES

Social Worker and Paraplegic

Ruth Hughes on Barriers: ***I never attended regular school; never went into a classroom until I began college in my 30's. Schools weren't set up for handicapped students — no ramps, no space for wheelchairs. Up until college, all my studies were done at home.***

Ruth Hughes jockeys her electric wheelchair up to her desk, and settles into a day's work, something which, as a younger person, she hoped but never expected to be allowed to do. And, she points out, other than herself and her family, few people expected her to be able to do it. She brings her "can do" attitude to her position as Monmouth County, New Jersey's Director of Easter Seals Community Services for Handicapped People. Easter Seals, a national non-profit organization, provides counseling, information and adaptive services to persons with all types of disabilities. The director's duties are many and varied; Ruth's days are full of situations which require tact, understanding and on-the-spot decisions. She thrives on the variety, and on assisting people with handi caps in overcoming them or dealing with them.

The Easter Seals office where Ruth works is located at Brookdale, the County College of Monmouth. The college is just 14 years old. Far-sighted design concepts adapted to the needs of handicapped students

were incorporated by the architects. Ruth can meet with the public, and also work with the college's handicapped students. This pleases Ruth; Brookdale is her school. She was among the first to attend in a wheelchair.

Previous to her college studies, Ruth had been workshop-trained in electronics assembly and had been employed for several years. The company moved its facility out of the area, and Ruth was out of a job. She realized the importance of employment and decided to bite the bullet and go to school for the first time. She had always wanted to work with people, to become a social worker, to help others make life transitions. She had unique knowledge of the needs and problems of the disabled, but lacked the formal training to use it. She needed education to pursue her goals. And she got it, but not without difficulty. Brookdale, designed *for* people in wheelchairs, had not been designed *by* people in wheelchairs. There were ramps, but some had doors which were too heavy or which opened the wrong way. Telephones were at "normal" eye-level. Not all bathrooms were adapted. Some instructors were not prepared to work with handicapped students; many classrooms had no space for her chair. Ruth had to learn to use her first electric wheelchair, to study on the college level and to speak up about the barriers which the school presented. She was effective in all these areas. The college now reflects Ruth's concerns. The inaccessibilities are fewer and fewer, the staff and faculty are receptive to handicapped students, the college's president has a special task force on the disabled.

Appropriately enough, Ruth is deeply involved with reality-based career counseling. She works with the long-term disabled to help them identify interests and skills, and to go about getting education and training. She communicates with the local Office of Rehabilitation and does much work with the newly-disabled in adjusting to handicaps and selecting appropriate areas for retraining. Ruth coordinates a cadre of volunteers who supply services, and maintains an equipment bank for persons unable to get aids or protheses through other agencies. She runs special-interest programs at the college and at local hospitals. One of these, a group for stroke victims, is growing week by week. The participants work together on adjusting to their stroke-related problems—

personal, physical and career-related. They provide each other with tips and with much-needed support. Ruth listens closely to each person, helping group members to voice concerns, allowing them to help each other. Because Easter Seals is not-for-profit, Ruth, in addition to her other duties, has had to become an adept fund-raiser.

Ruth feels singularly fortunate to be part of a supportive, loving family. Her parents and her three brothers, dedicated to helping her and to helping others, sought out the services available at the various stages of her life. They transported her — often having to carry her and her chair — so she could learn, meet challenges, and grow socially. The family's church activities were involved with helping, "missionary work" on a local level. She credits this "caring without pity" for her outlook on her own disability and those of the persons whom she counsels. She chose social work because she felt it was the best thing she could do, and the thing she could do best, and cautions disabled persons (and the non-disabled, for that matter) against choosing the field as a career because they see it as a refuge, or an area with many job openings, or because they want to "help people." Persons must choose careers that reflect interests and reality-based talents and

abilities, then set about gaining appropriate skills. It is often difficult, especially with the young, to identify realistic goals and channel frustrations into productivity instead of allowing them to disintegrate into anger. Ruth sees one aspect of this transition as becoming a "tough doer, rather than a tough talker. Too often," she feels, "people do themselves disservices by talking too much, and not doing what needs to be done."

Her main probem is transportation. Public transportation is virtually non-existent in the area, especially for those in wheelchairs. She is working with the local transportation department, but admits the going is slow. That doesn't stop her. Recently, she was honored by the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women for her achievements, and was named Volunteer of the Year by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's local chapter. The honors please her, but Ruth sees them as events rather than as ends in themselves. She looks forward to many more, different events. She intends to continue her education because learning enriches her life. Rather than viewing her disability as a hindrance, she feels strongly that there are many things she has been able to do *because* of it — that it has opened her up to people and experiences and allowed her to set her sights higher and higher.

NANSIE SHARPLESS, Ph.D.

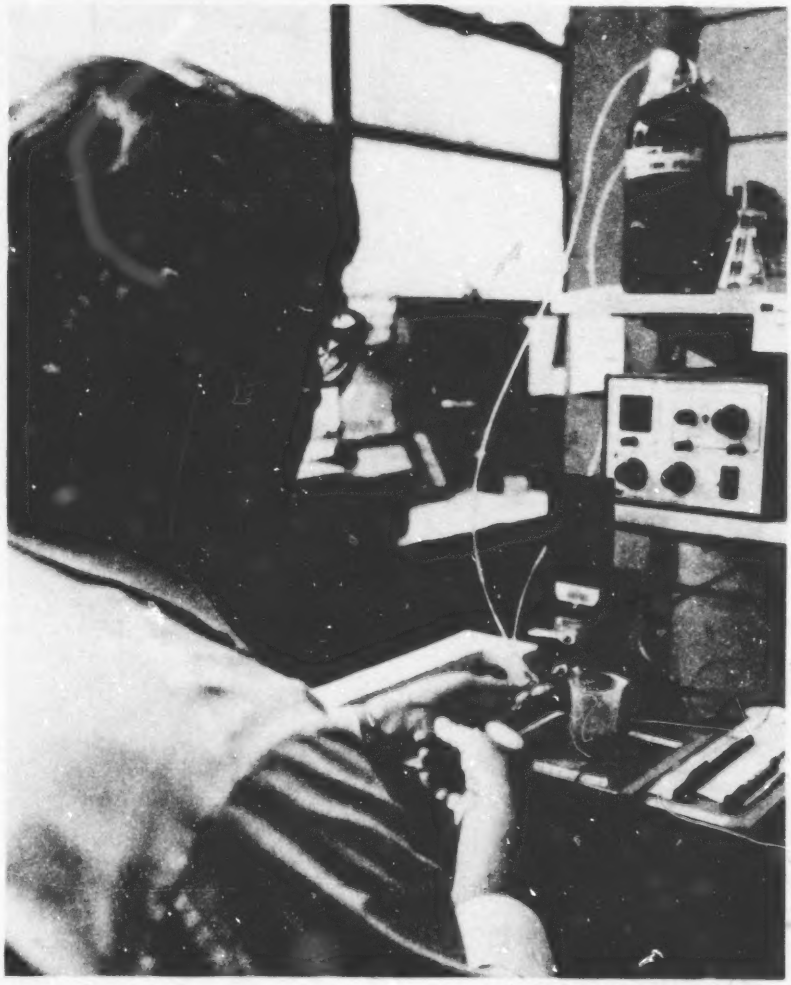
Research Neurochemist who is Deaf

Nansie Sharpless on Barriers: ***People sometimes tell me that I should do something about my voice; that it will stand in the way of advancing my career. I've had some contact with speech therapists, but the ones I've seen have just shown me accents and inflections and then sent me home to practice. How can a person with no hearing at all tell if she's doing it right?***

Neurochemistry. That is Dr. Nansie Sharpless's field. She speaks about it softly, carefully and quite clearly. On meeting her many wonder how she answers their questions so accurately. They know she is deaf. They look for her hearing aid; they expect to see a sign language interpreter. Neither are present. Then, they think, perhaps she *can* hear. That is not true; she is totally deaf. Nansie Sharpless, for three years running, lip-reading champion of the State of Michigan!

Nansie contacted meningitis at age 14. On Christmas Day she became deaf; by February she was back in junior high

school. Because her family had moved to the area shortly before she became ill, she didn't lose friends when she became deaf. She hadn't had time to make any. On Saturdays she used suburban and city transit to get to lip-reading classes. Acquiring skill with lip-reading went very slowly. In school, she had to learn to study in a different way. She couldn't depend on "picking up information" from the teacher or from classroom conversation. She couldn't learn about current events by listening to the news on the radio. The newspaper became vital. She had to read, memorize, and read some more. Because she had hearing until she was 14 years old, Nansie has a "voice imprint" and her brain can "hear" the words she reads, which is helpful in learning and memorizing. During her study transition, some grades went down — mostly those with emphasis on oral teaching and discussion. Her math skills remained excellent, however. She was sent to boarding school for her junior and senior years, meeting people on her own and developing lifetime friendships. Upon graduation, she went to college and earned a Bachelors Degree in zoology. Her desire to obtain marketable job skills led to pursuit of a Master of Science degree in medical technology, a field in which she subsequently worked for 11 years, perfecting her technical expertise. It was during this time that Nansie became lip-reading champ. She wants deaf people to realize that developing good lip-reading ability is progressive. "I was very discouraged," she says, "because I knew I wasn't understanding everything. I thought there must be something wrong with me, that I was stupid. People must realize that the ability *develops* slowly; it was probably ten



years before I became able to converse easily." Her friends urged her into the state lip-reading contest, and she won. It was only then she realized, "Boy, I must be pretty good." The experience was wonderful for her confidence.

Nansie says that her "field chose her." She needed and wanted to know more and so she went back to school and obtained a Ph.D. in biochemistry with a distributed minor in chemistry. She is now Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology and Chief of the Clinical Neuropsychopharmacology Laboratory at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, New York. Her teaching is done in the laboratory or in seminar groups directed to those with advanced interest in the field. Her research concentrates on neurochemistry, the chemistry of the brain. Presently she works with brain and spinal fluid, attempting to determine chemical changes which affect the brain, body, and emotions and from this to predict possible treatment strategies.

To do scientific research, Nansie feels a person must "be a little bit fussy and have a mind that questions." Systematic testing and analysis, plus the ability to interpret results logically are vital. Concentration on the subject at hand must be complete. In this area Nansie admits that deafness may be helpful. She is not distracted by noises or activity out of her line of sight. However, she "cannot do two things at once." If she is interrupted, she must take her full attention away from what she is doing and give it to dealing with the interruption. She also has continual "tinnitus" — head noises experienced by some profoundly deaf people. This is sometimes distracting, but she is used to it.

Nansie has published over 100 articles and abstracts in her speciality and attends conferences and lectures frequently. When she is presenting research results, she prefers "poster sessions" in which the subject is displayed on a bulletin board and the author is present to answer questions

about the work. This type of presentation is now widely used at scientific meetings. It is an ideal medium for deaf scientists, but wasn't created for them. Sometimes she speaks, relying on the audience's interest in her knowledge to keep them attentive and on a microphone to amplify her soft tones. "I've determined that the best way to improve my voice is to keep talking," she laughs. When she wishes to attend a non-scientific meeting, she takes along an oral interpreter. This specially-trained person sits facing Nansie and silently mouths the speaker's words. Nansie must be able to see to converse and she does not talk while she is walking. She stops, speaks, "listens" and moves on. The ability to read lips is especially important in science. Sign language contains no specific signs for much of the terminology. "Words have to be finger-spelled, and that takes too long." Nansie feels that lip-reading allows deaf individuals to have mobility in the working world as well. Her two technicians are hearing people; they know no sign language and Nansie must be able to communicate with them. She cracks a lot of quiet, subtle jokes about herself and her field. They enjoy working for the person as well as for the expert chemist.

Active in many professional organizations, Nansie is a past president of the Foundation for Science and the Handicapped, and belongs to other handicapped-awareness organizations as well. She loves to travel and, combining business and pleasure, has been all over the world. She subscribes to the ballet every season, and enjoys musical plays, preferring to read the scripts before she sees the performances, enjoying the movement on the stage.

Her advice to parents of children who are, or become, handicapped is, "Don't lower your expectations for them." Her parents became a little more protective, she had to become more assertive, but expectations were never lowered. She urges the disabled to get "better than average training" so that they will stand above the competition in the job hunt. And for deaf people, Nansie stresses facing communication problems realistically. If communication by voice is impaired, there are still many fields to choose from. "But they must be able to read and write English clearly." Dr. Nansie Sharpless obviously practices what she, in her soft voice, preaches.

HENRY HOLDEN

Actor/Lecturer on Crutches

Henry Holden on Barriers: ***Attitudes are the real disabilities. The terms used to describe persons with disabilities are negative — disabled, confined to a wheelchair, polio victim. Society handicaps people with disabilities.***

Viewers watching a certain prime-time series recently saw a television first. In a short but vital plot segment a switchboard telephone rang and the actor playing a hotel desk clerk rose, *picked up his crutches* and swung over to answer. Henry Holden is the actor. He was chosen not because the part called for a person on crutches, but because he was the right actor for the role. He auditioned, he was cast, he performed. The crutches were incidental, as they should be. Talent is what counts.

When he was four, Henry contracted polio and spent most of his grammar school years in and out of the hospital. He had numerous operations, he was fitted with braces and crutches, he went to school in the hospital and in special education facilities. In eighth grade he entered a regular school which had no special adaptations, and from there went on to high school, participating in just about everything. He played trombone in the concert band, accompanied the marching band on trips and played from the stands, managed the track team. He especially enjoyed school plays, and he auditioned for parts just like anyone else, refusing to be patronized with "assistant director" jobs. "My disability never interfered with what I wanted to do; I was never stigmatized by any peer group. I even played football with my friends. I'd wave my crutches in the quarterback's face to distract him."

Feeling he had to be practical, Henry put his love of acting aside to study political science in college. Upon graduation, he took a teaching position and later moved into the business world. He passed the real estate sales and brokerage tests. But more and more, he yearned to act. And as this desire grew, he found he wanted to bring "people with disabilities out of the background and into the public eye. There are no role models for disabled kids, and everyone needs role models."

He began acting lessons at the Lee Strasburg Studio in

New York. He "made the rounds" of casting offices, with little success. He chose another route. As an acting class assignment, he had developed impersonations of the ways in which various celebrities would walk with crutches. He used these routines as the foundation for a comedy act, testing materials at try-out clubs, in New York at Catch a Rising Star and The Improv, and at The Comedy Store in Hollywood. His humor "grew out of the disability. I always had a sense of humor; people with disabilities had better be able to laugh. I wanted to use it to desensitize the attitudes about the disabled. I became known as the stand-up comic who makes fun of standing up."

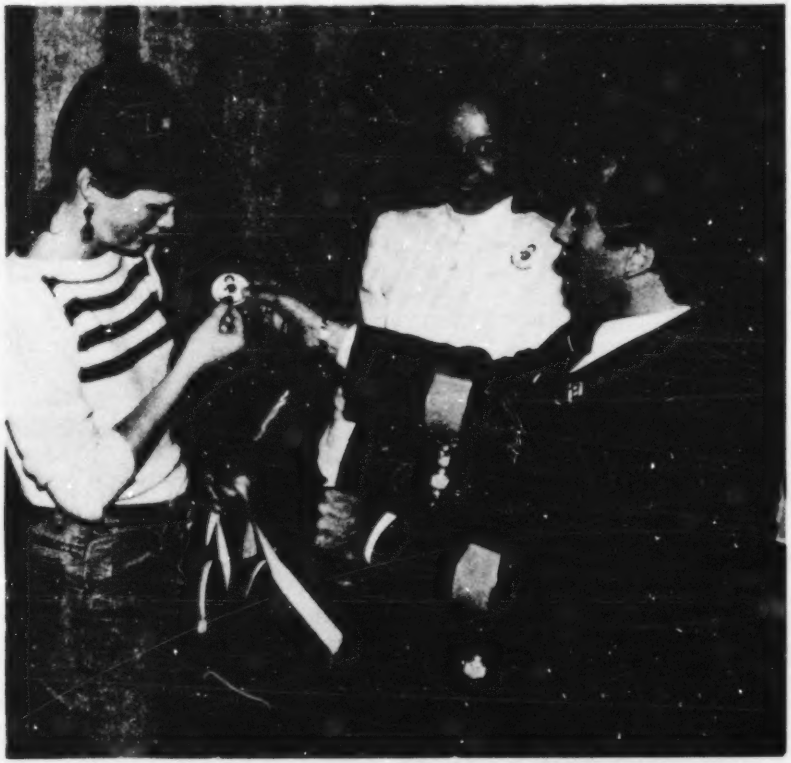
Henry incorporated some of his comedy into a lecture geared toward college students. Since most of them will enter the workforce and may be in positions to influence attitudes about his "minority group" he accepts bookings all over the country to speak about the development and continuation of negative attitudes toward disabled persons. He deplores the "telethon mentality" which causes audiences to feel pity. He points out that persons with disabilities are virtually ignored in the media, being cast neither in commercials nor in shows. "Disabled people are seen on the air only if they are newsworthy."

He became newsworthy; people began to notice Henry Holden, actor/lecturer. He was invited to appear on talk and magazine format shows, The Phil Donahue Show, P.M. Magazine, Real People. In these appearances, Henry says, "I may be three people — Henry Holden actor, Henry Holden horseback rider, Henry Holden bowler. I'm not just a disability." Henry proudly demonstrates his self-developed vault from crutch to saddle, and speaks happily of his bowling average. He talks about his work at regional theatres, notably a play called "Disabled Genius" in which his co-stars were a blind person and a deaf person. The reviews were excellent, but Henry feels audiences may have strayed away because works featuring the disabled are automatically thought of as "depressing." A member of The Actors Equity

union and the Screen Actors Guild, Henry chairs the latter's Minority Committee which, until his membership, dealt mainly with the increasing use of ethnic minorities in film roles. Henry's parts in national series attest to his effectiveness as a spokesperson for performers with disabilities; he is currently under consideration for a continuing role as a doctor in a new series.

Meanwhile, he continues to audition and to "take his act on the road." He crosses the country, performing and lecturing. His stamina is incredible. "The public tends to see people with disabilities as ill. In a recent month, I traveled 20,000 miles — New Jersey, Washington State, Idaho, back to Washington, Atlanta, Syracuse, Miami, Buffalo, L.A., Arizona. My days can run from a breakfast meeting at 7 a.m. through an entire day of programs to a late dinner/lecture. I give people their money's worth. Does that sound like a sick person?"

Henry uses the term "differently able." He says, "I walk, I just walk different." When he got new, lightweight braces, he immediately bought tap shoes. Working with a dance teacher, he's developed a jazz/gymnastics/tap routine. He keeps in shape with exercise, swimming over 500 miles in the past two years. He emphasizes quality and style, often performing in a dinner jacket with "designer crutches" made in Europe. He wants invitations from groups involved with the disabled so



he can show what can be accomplished by training and using "what you have." To disabled people considering performing, he stresses training, becoming skilled in acting, voice, accents. "If you have use of your legs," he says, "learn to dance. And take classes with the general public, not those especially designed for persons with handicaps."

Henry loves the work, saying "Show business is the greatest high in the world." He doesn't want special treatment, asking like any actor, only that he be considered. Rejection is constant, he must keep up a good self-image and rely on his talent. Eventually he hopes to become president of the Screen Actors Guild, to stand before his fellow professionals as an anti-stereotype. "I'm an activist, I'm a catalyst. I want to change attitudes so a great wasted resource (disabled people) will be used." To anyone considering acting, he counsels determination, and sends the traditional show business good-luck wish, "Break a leg."

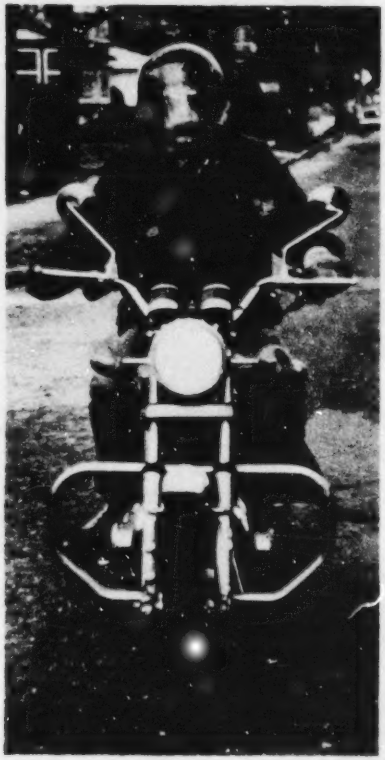
PETER LUCYK

One-handed Maintenance Mechanic

Pete Lucyk on Barriers: ***I always have to prove myself a little more. When I got my license, I was required to take two tests — one on an automatic car, one on standard. When I got my motorcycle license, they were going to restrict me to my left-handed cycle. I had to talk them into letting me test again on a friend's "regular" bike. I passed all the tests.***

"To become a mechanic," explains Pete Lucyk, "you have to want to get dirty." The facility in which he works has all types of motorized equipment, and it is apparent immediately that few of the vehicles are clean. Pete is responsible for the repair and maintenance work for his employer's large fleet of cars and trucks. Because the site is rural and the landscaping extensive, Pete also oversees a full range of lawn equipment, from push mowers to tractors and backhoes. He also works on pumps, sprayers, portable generators, plows and more. There is a small area devoted to welding. Spot welding is done on-site; larger jobs are sent out. "I take care of the jobs that need small, messy welds," says Pete, "that's about our limit here."

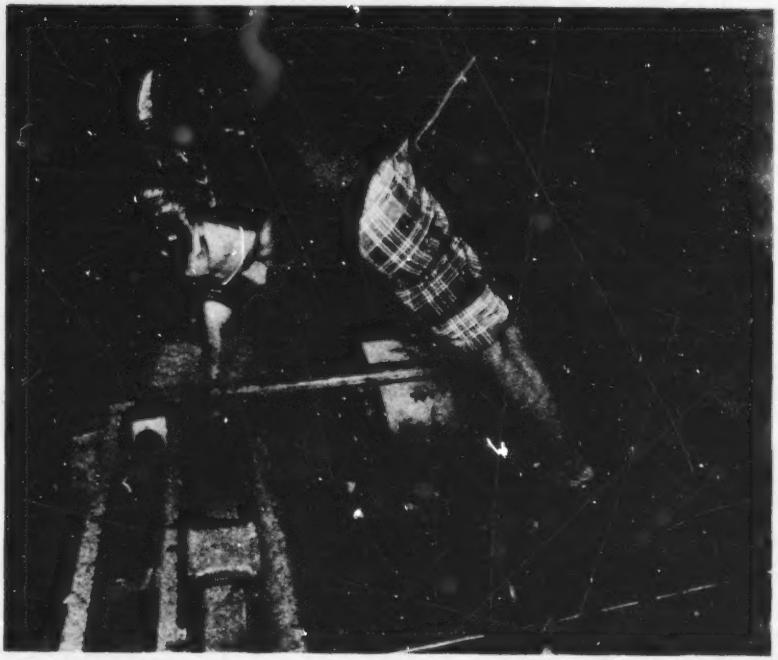
His interest in auto racing led him to his profession. Since childhood the local race tracks drew him with their speed and excitement. As he grew, he began to work with drivers and pit crew members. "I always wanted to build and work on engines," so Pete entered a two-year college



automotive program which turned him into a fully-trained mechanic. Upon graduation from his associate degree course of study, Pete was hired and proved himself as quickly as he had at the track. Because of his abilities, his employer re-wrote Pete's job description, expanding the range of maintenance and supervisory duties. Pete moved into the high position easily. He's always been a mover.

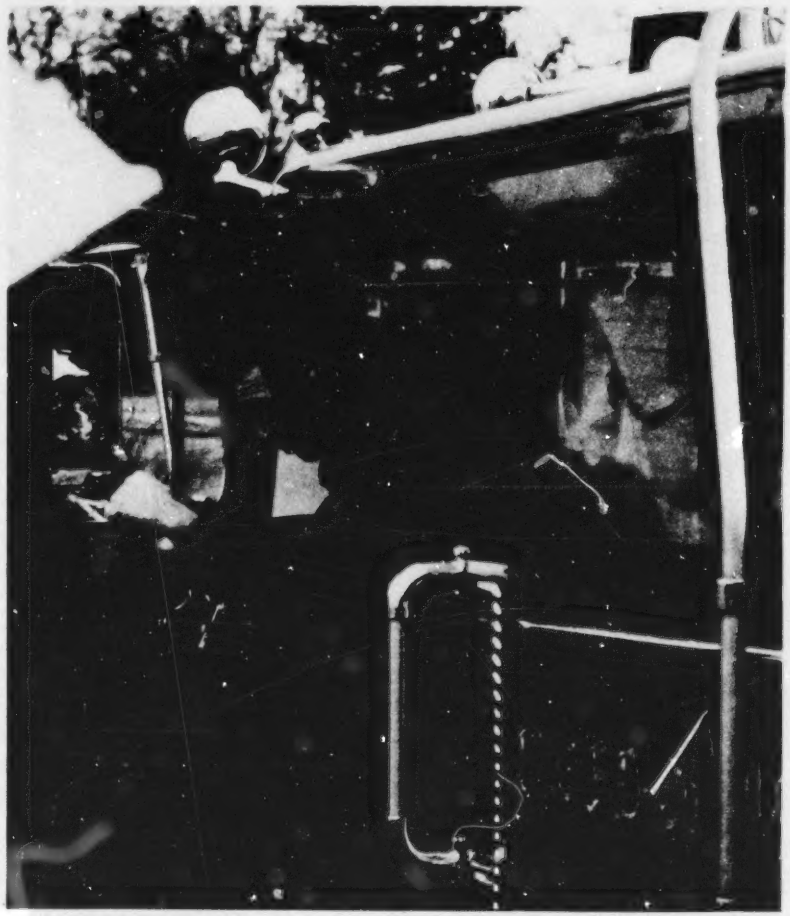
Born without a right hand, as a child he was fitted with a prosthesis. It had a cumbersome shoulder harness and, "was hot in the summer. I used to take it off a lot, hide it around my classroom. The girls would scream — it was great!" Such behavior led to his grammar school nickname, "The One-Armed Bandit." Feeling that the artificial hand did not help him, Pete discarded it. But he is aware of great advances in the field, and appreciates the work being done for those with needs greater than his.

Pete enjoys his trade because of the variety of challenges. He can move from one type of vehicle to another; interrupt a long job to do a quick, minor repair and send a car back to the road. "I was lucky to have good teachers. I learned to do jobs both ways — the most modern way, and the way you have to do it if you don't have all the new equipment. The field is becoming so advanced that a person almost has to be a computer technician to use the new diagnostic tools. But I have to know how to trouble-shoot, and so does any mechanic. You can't count on your employer's shop having the latest, and you still have to do the job." With all the advances, Pete must read a great deal. Engines change and manuals are updated almost



overnight! Because he supervises other personnel, Pete must be able to communicate clearly, in person and in writing. "For this job, along with wanting to get dirty," Pete communicates, "you have to think methodically and have good instincts, as well as good mechanical skills."

Outside the job, Pete's instincts lead him in many directions. He is a licensed water safety instructor and has taught life-saving classes. "When I took that test," he laughs, "they gave me the biggest guy. I brought him in." Active in all kinds of sports, water and downhill skiing, football, soccer, bowling, Pete also pitches for two softball teams. "I always wanted to play sports and found ways to do it," says Pete. "If you want to, you find a way." Because auto racing is becoming too expensive, Pete has started sailing and hopes to build his own boat. Along with these, Pete has an additional, career-related interest, and it, like mechanics, also involves vehicles. "When you're little, you see those red trucks flying around! I've always wanted to fight fires." As captain of his town's volunteer fire company, Pete has thorough training in all aspects of fire fighting. To date he has not had to rescue any trapped people, but knows that he has the training to do



it. He is on the Board of Directors of The Fire Academy and supervises the school's student development program for a staff of 25 instructors.

This involvement has led Pete back to college; he is pursuing a bachelors degree in the new field of fire engineering. When he graduates, he hopes to become a director of fire safety, "getting into protection and prevention systems and overall safety programs," in business or industry. The organizational skills necessary to mechanics serve him well in his current studies.

Pete is doing the things he has "always wanted to do," and following his interests has paid off. He does not feel hindered

by his disability, and makes many jokes about it. "When I was a lifeguard, I'd tell the kids a shark got my hand. It kept them out of the water and made my job easier." And another story, "I tell kids that's what happens when you suck your thumb." Speaking seriously, Pete says he's happy to talk to children, feeling sorry for the parents who are embarrassed by the children's natural curiosity. So what's next for Pete? "Violin lessons. I'm not kidding. I've always wanted to play the violin."

TERRI SEITZ-BROWN

Teacher in a Wheelchair

Terri Seitz-Brown on Barriers: ***People can be put off by the chair, unsure how to react. If you and I come into a room together, it's likely that people will talk to you first, because they're uncomfortable with the chair.***

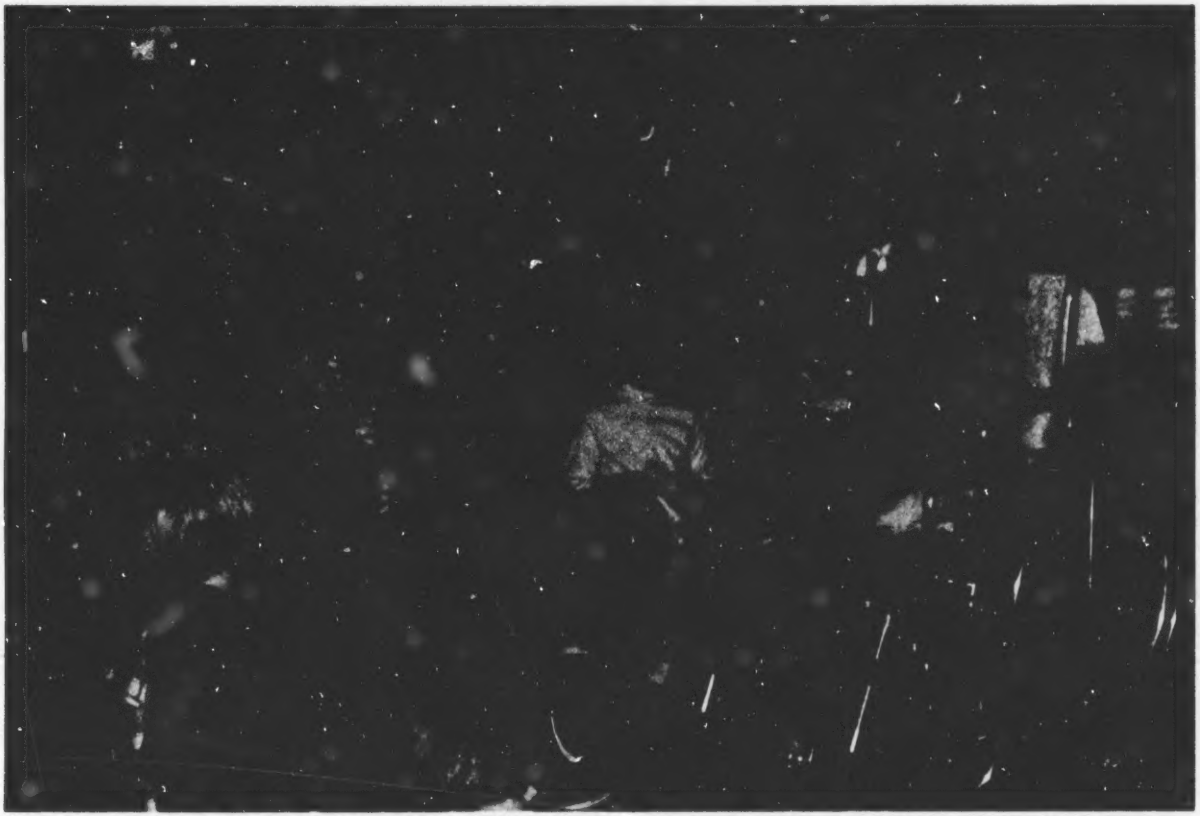
The second graders cluster around their teacher. They are intent on the reading assignment. Their teacher asks questions. They think, raise hands (some of which swing wildly) and answer. Then they write in the right words on their answer sheets. Terri Seitz-Brown is just as intent, watching closely, making sure each child understands. One little boy is chewing on a pencil, resting his foot on his teacher's wheelchair. A girl needs attention: Terri rolls back so they can speak privately. They consult in whispers, heads on the same level. Then the child pushes her teacher back into the group, and returns to her desk.

Terri had been teaching for six years when her motor accident occurred. Several vertebrae were crushed and her spinal cord was damaged. It took her a year to "pick up the pieces." She had to learn to dress herself, to bathe, to drive a hand-controlled car. She had to face the fact that she would never walk again. She had to "sort out her friends" — separating the true from the temporary. She had always

been a "go-getter" and her rehabilitation was no exception; within a year she was ready to return to the classroom. And then she was faced with the problem of accessibility. Her board of education located several "possibly accessible" schools. She looked at them, one by one. "The board didn't realize that even a single step is impossible for me. One school was perfect, but the principal didn't want me, I could tell. For the first time I knew how discrimination felt, and it didn't feel good." Then she found Middleborough, just before the school year began. During pre-year meetings, teachers shied away from her a bit, not sure how she would react to their questions. Terri responded with openness, the teachers rallied with support. This was helpful, but how to deal with the children? On the first day of school, Terri reached the parking lot with no idea of how she would proceed with her class. "I shed a tear, and then went in," she says. "I went with my old technique of asking each child to talk to the class, then, it came naturally, *I* talked to them. I told them all about my injury, and to ask any questions they wanted answered. They responded with great interest and curiosity, feeling my back and inspecting the chair. Once their questions were handled, we just went on normally. They hardly seem to notice the chair now." When a high school student, also in a wheelchair, joined the class as a volunteer aide, Terri suggested the technique to him. He used it, and "Mr. Lon" is now another natural part of the classroom scene. He credits Terri's attitude and excellent teaching methods for his growth in working with the children. Initially assigned only to Terri, his work has become so effective that several other teachers have requested his services.

The children provided the answer to Terri's concerns with getting around the school to the lunchroom, the playground, the bus stops. On the classroom wall is a poster with a list of weekly assignments. The most prized slot, that of "chair pusher," is hotly contested, beating out blackboard cleaning by a mile. "When parents first heard their child was going to be a pusher, they didn't quite understand," laughs Terri. The kids wheel her from place to place, sometimes using the wheelchair for "free rides" as they push, stepping up on the back of the chair as it glides down a ramp. "They take care of me, almost protect me."

Terri wants to see more people with disabilities involved in education, working in grammar schools and high schools as teachers. She accepts many requests to serve



as a model for the disabled, and has been the subject of several articles in national education publications, most notably one entitled "Disabled Educators: Assets Not Handicaps to Good Teaching." In addition she has placed herself in the public eye to increase awareness, to show that handicaps do not affect abilities. The Federal Department of Education used her picture on their "Year of the Disabled" poster. She made a national commercial for the Smithsonian Institution, promoting its accessibility. The year before her marriage, she was voted "Miss Wheelchair Maryland" and went on to the national contest. She was a finalist, and was named Miss Congeniality by her fellow contestants. She is an honorary member of the Baltimore County Board of Education, and was cited by the Governor for outstanding service. She does volunteer counseling, and serves on the Governor's Speakers Bureau. She makes television appearances, has a local commercial about a camp for disabled children, and addresses groups and organizations about handicap-related issues.

With all of this, she remains first and foremost a teacher. Dorothy Dorman, her principal, has "learned so

much from Terri's dedication to teaching. On days when I'm tempted to stay home, I think of Terri. Even when she's in the hospital, she remains actively involved."

One of her pupils says that, "At first, I felt kind of weird about the wheelchair, scared. But now it's okay." Another chimes in, "I had a good feeling about her the first time I saw her." From a third, "She lets us have lots of parties." Terri stresses that the parties are a device to teach nutrition. At a recent meeting, a mother approached Terri to thank her for introducing her child to broccoli!

Terri feels that having a teacher who is "different" is a help to her pupils. They see her problems and it helps them with their own. If they are slow learners, learning disabled, or even unpopular, they can look at her and realize that others have problems too. Because she is "different" they can see that "different" isn't a bad word. Terri is patient, a quality vital to good teaching. She feels an effective educator needs tolerance and understanding, and of course, a good education. Her medical problems sometimes discourage her to the point of tears, but then she picks herself up. "I've got a lot to live for, a lot of joy, and a lot more to do."

A visitor asks a child about her teacher's wheelchair. "It doesn't stand in the way of her career," is the little girl's quick reply. It certainly doesn't.

GLOSSARY

Aura:
a sensation that may precede an attack of migraine or an epileptic seizure

Benign:
non-cancerous and therefore not an immediate threat

Braille:
a system of printing for the blind consisting of raised dots or points that can be read by touch

Cerebral palsy:
a motor function disorder caused by a permanent, non-progressive brain defect present at birth or shortly thereafter. The disorder is usually associated with premature or abnormal birth and oxygen deprivation, causing damage to the nervous system.

Deafness:
a condition characterized by a partial or complete loss of hearing. Deafness may be temporary or permanent and may date from birth or be acquired in childhood, adolescence or adulthood. Many conditions and diseases may result in deafness.

Dylantin:
manufacturer's name for an anticonvulsant drug

Epilepsy:
a group of neurological disorders characterized by recurrent episodes of convulsive seizures, sensory disturbances, abnormal behavior, loss of consciousness, or all of these

Finger spelling:
when no sign (see "Sign Language") exists for a thought or concept, the word can be spelled out using the American manual alphabet. It is also used for titles, proper names and convenience.

Grand mal seizure:
an epileptic seizure characterized by a generalized involuntary muscular contraction and cessation followed by tonic and clonic spasms of the muscles. Breathing resumes with noisy respirations. The teeth may be clenched, the tongue bitten. As this phase of the seizure passes, the person may fall into a deep sleep for an hour or more. Usually, the person has no recall of the seizure on awakening. A sensory warning, or aura, usually precedes each grand mal seizure.

Hearing aid:
The aid consists of a receiver and amplifier of sound. All sounds in the environment are amplified with the same intensity. A hearing aid does not sort, process or discriminate among sounds. Because a person is wearing a hearing aid, it does not mean that the person can hear normally. Aids do not correct hearing, but they improve hearing in some people.

Interpreter:
a professional person who assists deaf persons in communicating with hearing people

Measles:
an acute, highly-contagious, viral disease involving the respiratory tract and characterized by a spreading rash. The disease occurs primarily in young children who have not been immunized.

Meningitis:
any infection or inflammation of the membranes covering the brain and spinal cord

Osteogenesis imperfecta:
a genetic disorder involving defective development of the connective tissue. It is characterized by abnormally brittle and fragile bones that are easily fractured

Paraplegia:
an abnormal condition characterized by motor or sensory loss in the lower limbs. This condition may or may not involve the back and abdominal muscles and may cause either complete or incomplete paralysis. About 50% of approximately 11,000 spinal cord injuries reported each year in the United States involve paraplegia. Such injuries commonly occur as the result of automobile and motorcycle accidents, sporting accidents, falls and gunshot wounds

Polio:
short for poliomyelitis, an infectious disease caused by one of three polio-viruses. Paralytic poliomyelitis may involve varying degrees of paralysis

Prosthesis:
an artificial replacement for a missing part of the body or a device designed and applied to improve function, as a hearing aid

Sign Language:
American Sign Language is one form of manual communication used by deaf Americans. Sign language is not universal. Deaf persons from different countries speak different sign languages. The gestures or symbols are organized in a linguistic way. Each individual gesture is a sign. Each sign has three distinct parts — the hand shape, the position of the hands, and the movement of the hands. The ways in which the signs of American Sign Language are combined are unique to it. They are not based on English or any other spoken language. American Sign Language is the language used by the majority of deaf persons throughout the United States.

Stroke (apoplexy):
sudden dimunition or loss of consciousness, sensation and voluntary motion caused by rupture or obstruction of an artery of the brain

Tinnitis:
tinkling or ringing heard in one or both ears

Tonic/clonic:
Tonus—the normal state of balanced tension in the tissues of the body, especially the muscles
Clonus—an abnormal pattern of neuromuscular activity characterized by rapidly alternating involuntary contraction and relaxation of skeletal muscles

Definitions adapted from:
Mosby's Medical and Nursing Dictionary
Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary
Faculty Handbook—The College Student with a Disability

BREAKING through BARRIERS

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